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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
THURSDAY, AUGUST 7, 2008

In Today's Papers

21 Academics Resign in Protest of the President's Rector
Appointments

All papers report the aftermath of President Abdullah Gul's rejection of university-nominated rector candidates who oppose lifting the headscarf ban in universities. Gul refused to appoint nine out of 21 candidates who were elected to become rectors of their universities. Instead, he appointed those who came second or third in their respective universities' voting, but who do not oppose the headscarf in universities. Among the rejected candidates was Akdeniz University Rector Mustafa Akaydin, who, as the head of the inter-university board, opposed efforts by the ruling AKP government earlier this year to lift the headscarf ban in universities. "The President's rejection is due to ideological reasons. If he had been an impartial president, the result would be different. I'm paying the price for the headscarf question," said Akaydin. Gul also appointed Professor Jale Sarac as the Rector of Dicle University in the southeastern province of Diyarbakir. Sarac, who came second in the voting at her university, had run as a candidate from the AKP in the 2007 general elections.

On Wednesday, 12 professors, including a dean, resigned from Istanbul Technical University (ITU) to protest the appointments. In Ankara, Gazi University Medical Faculty Dean Professor Ayse Dursun and her deputy resigned because Gul appointed Professor Riza Ayhan -- who was vetoed by former President Ahmet Necdet Sezer -- as the new rector of the university. The chief physician of Izmir's Dokuz Eylul University Hospital, Sedef Gidener, also resigned. Gidener was not appointed by Gul even though she won the elections in her university. In total, 21 leading academics resigned. Liberal Radikal says, "Gul's removal of all rectors who are known as AKP adversaries has opened a new period in higher education in which all balances in the universities have changed."

Editorial Commentary on Rector Assignments

"Rector Assignments"

Ergun Babahan criticizes the rector selection system in mainstream Sabah (8/7): "While there were no reactions to President Sezer's

rector assignments, there is harsh criticism of several of Gul's appointments. As a matter of fact, YOK's system to assign rectors is very wrong. Under the name of elections, personnel is distributed among candidates, the candidate who gets the most personnel (votes) has the power to even name his or her spouse as the winner. Also, scientific criteria have always been treated as a secondary priority during the rector elections. The correct way to elect a rector is through an election among the university's board of trustees. By establishing such a system, the President will be saved from controversial assignment decisions."

CHP-Military Row over YAS Decisions

All papers report the controversy between the military and the opposition CHP because the High Military Council (YAS) expelled no one at their August 4th meeting for fundamentalist activities. In a news conference on Tuesday, the CHP deputy group chief Kemal Kilicdaroglu slammed the military for having "warm ties" with the ruling AKP government. Kilicdaroglu also accused the military of being "bribed" by the AKP government because they gave outgoing TGS Chief General Yasar Buyukanit an expensive armored luxury car.

Following yesterday's TGS statement denouncing Kilicdaroglu's charges about the YAS meetings, the President's Office responded with a statement criticizing the allegations. "It cannot be understood how a political party representative (i.e., Kilicdaroglu,) can ignore the public good and criticize the good relations between state institutions, or why that representative would be unhappy that the YAS issued no expulsions. The claim that the President was not going to sign the YAS decisions is factually incorrect, while the claim that a vehicle was purchased at an

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extraordinary sum for a retired TGS chief is slander," the statement said.

Islamist-oriented Zaman carries the headline, "The CHP is Uneasy with Government-Military Harmony." Papers comment the military and the President reacted strongly to Kilicdaroglu's comments.

Editorial Commentary on the Kurdish Issue

"The Path to EU Membership Depends on Solving the Cyprus and Kurdish Issues"

Hasan Cemal commented in mainstream Milliyet (8/7): "If Turkey wants to advance on the path to EU membership, then it is obliged to solve the Cyprus problem and the Kurdish problem. The path to the EU will be blocked if these problems are not solved. If the EU path is blocked then the path to the democratic state of law will be blocked as well. If Turkey is not a democratic state of law, foreign investors will not invest, which will cause vast economic problems in Turkey. While Turkey should continue its rightful fight against violence and poverty in order to eliminate the PKK problem, Turkey should take serious measures to prevent people from joining the PKK and also, to bring down the ones who are already in PKK camps in the mountains. If Turkey cannot or does not take necessary measures to find a solution to the Kurdish issue, it cannot continue to advance on the path to the EU. The more Turkey distances itself from the EU path, the more Kurdish nationalism and separatist views will increase. Therefore, the PM should display political determinism and courage to solve this specific issue."

TV News:
CNN Turk

Domestic News

- CHP deputy chairman Bihlun Tamayligil accused the AKP government of trying to find an excuse for the reluctance of the Iranian President Ahmadinejad to visit Ataturk's Mausoleum during his upcoming visit to Turkey.

- An explosion at one of the gas stations near Erzincan in eastern Turkey has temporarily cut oil transportation through the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) oil pipeline. The local officials have ruled out sabotage.

- The government is taking measures to prevent speculative increases in food prices during the upcoming Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

International News

- The Iraqi Parliament adjourned for a month-long break without reaching an agreement on a provincial elections law. The Iraqi Parliament will reconvene August 9.

- The Japanese city of Hiroshima marked the 63rd anniversary of the U.S. nuclear attack on the city.

- The Hamas-controlled parliament in Gaza proposed an initiative for reconciliation between Hamas and President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah movement.

WILSON